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NATIONAL UNITY

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LECTURE

BY

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THE NATIONAL UNITY.

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN.—I must say I feel proud that I am a fellow countryman of the natives of Poona. It is simply impossible for any one rejoicing in the Indian name to reflect on the hallowed associations of this historical city, without feeling himself ennobled in the company of its inhabitants. Indeed it appears to me an act of presumption on my part to address you on such a subject as that of National Unity. I have always looked upon this great city as the fountain head of political life (cheers). It is my conviction that I must school myself for years and years together in the traditions of this great city, before I can consider myself competent to do justice to this great subject. Nevertheless, friends, you must excuse this act of presumption on my part. It strikes me that there is a sort of talismanic influence in the very atmosphere of Poona, and thanks to your kindness that you have lodged us in quarters that are redolent with that talismani. During the short space of time we have been here, we have drawn from the fountain of political life an inspiration, which it appears, we shall be able to take with us even to Bengal, and be remembered there with gratitude to you—the people of Poona. Friends, I mean to speak to you on the question of National Unity. India has been called the epitome of the world. We are all proud of it, because our country has been represented even by those who would not like to see it so represented, and if our country

is an epitome of the world, surely we may take it to be our destination that, the Indian nationality is an epitome of all nationalities. At the same time when we take pride to ourselves because of the destination that may await us, it becomes us to see whether or not we are justified in our life to represent what is made of us in the world. Yes, our country is indeed a great country. Reflect for a moment on the population of India. We are, as you all know, 250 millions strong, we have been reading in our school-books the population of India, but how seldom do we reflect on that number really being so strong. You will excuse me, therefore, if I ask you to realise for yourself what the 250 millions of population really signify. Let the people of India be placed side by side in a row all round the globe, and I assure you that you will have two such rows one after the other, and yet there shall be many more left to occupy yet more the circumference of the globe. We may encircle the globe, and yet there shall be left as many thousands over. That is what we should seek to realise—250 millions strong. Why, we know that our children have often asked of us to help them, if possible, to stretch forth their hands that they might reach the moon, and it is simply a mathematical fact if we could only realise it that the population of India is quite sufficient ;—if we only stood one above the shoulders of another, we might really go up and up till we might reach the moon. Such is the extent of our population. When we consider the various people that inhabit India, and their characteristic attributes, surely we may take pride to ourselves that we have here the very characteristics which have contributed to the greatness of other nations

on the face of the earth. Has intelligence contributed to greatness elsewhere ? We have in our country intelligence of the highest type ! ! If in addition to the head and heart, we require the exercise of the hand, why, we have in India even the greatest amount of physical energy. Is moral energy required ? You have it. Is intellectual energy required ? You have it. Is physical energy required ? You have it. No people inhabiting any other country in the world will be able to manifest all these requisites together. At the same time if we are priveliged to consider ourselves as one nation, then certainly each one of us has a right to see that the physical energy is mine. It may not be mine but it is my brother's ; so it is mine. So in point of moral or intellectual energy we would realise our position thus, you have only to realise this grand fact that you constitute one nation, and then you may take your position on the face of the earth, and hold forth yourselves as possessing all the requisites of a nationality that is destined to be the epitome of all nationalities (Cheers).—Nor is this all. Shall we think for a moment of the thousand resources of this country. India has truly been the epitome of the world, and therefore whatever the world's resources may be, you have samples of them all within the four corners of your own country. We are not wanting in physical resources ; we are in a position to supply other countries out of the abundance of our natural resources. Is it not a fact that you have answered the great nations on the face of the earth, and if they have succeeded in establishing a sort of natural empire on the face of earth, is it not because India has contributed to their greatness ? Yes, other nations

have become great out of the abundance of our natural resources, and shall we not take shame to ourselves that we have not availed ourselves of all the resources placed at our disposal? What other evidence do we require ? You talk of other countries, and you always speak of England as a great country. If she has succeeded in establishing a sort of natural empire, shame to us if we cannot establish a sort of natural empire in this country of ours !! Shall we not for a moment take to heart that, if we were only just to our country—just to ourselves, we might even now succeed as one great nationality, a sort of reservoir out of which shall be supplied to the other nations (cheers). That appears to be our destiny. If we have such resources, how is it we do not constitute the great nationality that we are destined to form for ourselves. That is the most important question—that is the most serious question. If now we have a claim to the title of patriots, if we are inspired with a love for our country, it becomes us to consider how is it that we do not occupy the place for which we are destined. This is the most serious question to every son and daughter of India ; and every son and daughter must anwer that question for himself and for herself. Why if elsewhere wonders have been achieved, why not have we similar manifestations here ? Why should we be represented as epitome of the world, and yet, if challenged, should not be able to produce phases and aspects of greatness of which every nation is justly proud ? We realise in our minds several phases of greatness which are ever manifested on face of earth. There are materials at our disposal scattered all over the country, but there is no such thing as organi-

sation. Now how is India to bring about such an organization as to reduce to a sort of harmony the materials at our disposal scattered over the face of the country? This is the problem, but how is it to be solved? How are our intellectual and moral and phisical energies to be concentrated? Ah, we need a focus. Let all the resources of India converge to this focus, and then alone India shall manifest itself before the world as the true epitome of the world. What is to be is the great consummating point of union? When we think of India as a great country, when we think of its various peoples and all the diversities of character, the diversities of influence that separate so far one from the other, we are sometimes tempted to despair of such a consummation. Is it possible that the 250 millions of people who exceed the population of all the countries of Europe—why the population of Africa and America combined would scarcely come up to the population of this country—is it possible I say that this large population, so diversified in everything that distinguishes man from man, can ever claim such a consummation? Certainly we are tempted to despair; but the question is, shall we give way to despair? If not, how is the consumation to be brought about? Is it the language that will bring about the consummation? Let us think of the languages spoken in the country, and we find there are no end of languages spoken. Not one language—not the dialect of that language—the modifications further still of that language. Yes, language drives us one from the other. No doubt, it is sometimes said in Bengal, and it was once argued as to whether we should have a common language that might operate as a sort of consumating bond among

the populations of India, and it was said that this language which was destined to be a sort of consummating bond all over India was the English language. It was contended on the other hand that the Hindoostanee was the language that would do this. If language is to be the consummating bond, and if the English langauage is to be that consumating bond, ah, I can scarcely bear that idea. I must frankly confess that I can hardly bear the idea that the consummating bond of India should be a speech, and that too a foreign speech which should operate not as the consummating bond of India, but as a bond as it were imported into the country from outside. What, is foreign speech to be the consummating bond (Loud applause). Shall we look to a foreign importation for our consummating bond? Ah, I can scarcely brook that idea. Whether or not the Hindoostanee is destined to be that consummating bond, I cannot say, but if it is destined, we can yet claim that to be ours. Gentleman, I know not what the state of things may be in this country, but in Bengal for example there is a rush for English language, and the Vernaculars of the country are neglected. Nay, you will find educated men and even those pofessing patriotism of the highest type despising the Vernaculars of the country. Well then, when you find the Vernaculars of the country despised by these socalled patriots, I take it that there is not a spark of patriotism in the hearts of such patriots. What, if a sort of feeling of contempt for the Vernaculars of the country? Do you profess patriotism? do you profess love for your mother India, and yet despise the language which you have learnt as you have sucked your mothers milk. (Applause). That

is a thing which I can scarcely bear. Oh, let us see to it that we stick to our language—hold it in a higher estimation than we hold the English language—a foreign language that may be imported into our country, however profitable it may be to us. I don't see, gentlemen, how can we in a short space of time bring about a universal extension all over India of the English Language. We feel the difficulty. We have been for example in this Presidency for a few days, but when we sit together, and talk together, why, we sometimes talk and talk, but what we understand, the others don't understand. When we hear others talk, we get away with the idea that they have been abusing us in a language we fail to understand. We feel the difficulty—we are completely puzzled—we are completely bewildered. Why must we take shelter in a foreign language? Shall we apply ourselves to the social bond? Ah, there too, we find that India is a country within the limits of which you find all the phases of sociology enforced that have ever manifested themselves in the various countries of the world. We know how this diversity has been brought about. No doubt India being a great country—being a vast country—and being inhabited by vast population, it has come to be full of diversities of social manners and customs, but depend that, when we reflect on the history of India, we know that there have been influences in operation which have from time to time added to these social diversities leaving a mark in the country, so that we really have to give way to despair if we ever think of bringing about a unanimity of social manners and customs. We know this country has been subject to various invasions from time to

time. Shall we speak of the Greeks—of the Mussulmans, —of the Portuguese, or the Portuguese? Yes, from time to time this countryof ours has been subject to foreign invasions, and these foreign invaders have left behind them social marks which it is impossible even at this distance of time to obliterate. We may have organzied for ourselves one unanimous sociology; but such has not been our case. We have been the victims to foreign influences which we have felt impossible to resist,—impossible to overcome. These influences have been stamped upon our life—upon our faith,—upon the society—upon our families,—upon our households. Ah, it grieves to see that these foreign influences have admission into our households!—It is a melancholy fact—the fact stares us in the face, and we despair. Here we are a handful of Bengalees before you. Well, supposing it was proposed we should exhange our dress, if we Bengalees are called upon to put on the head dress of yours, or if we ask you people of Poona to uncover your heads, I believe such a thing will never be realized. At least, I for myself would despair of it. You will say that the proposal was preposterous. Thus you see in trifling matters connected with sociology marks strougly impressed upon us which it is not possible to obliterate, and we despair bringing about an unanimity in social matters. Then, what is to be our consummating bond? It has been said over and over again that if there is an influence potent enough to bring about unanimity, ah, that is the influence of Religion. That is no doubt true, if it only could be realized. We all know that if all India had but one religion,—if all Indian life were mould-

ed on the basis of one Religion, I say if we were one people and had but one Lord, no doubt the consummation of which we have been speaking, may easily be affected. (Hear, hear.) There have been in India religious instructors without number, one instructor after another, and potent instructros have they all been ;—and although I should pray devoutly for this consummation to be moulded on the basis of one religion, nevertheless, gentlemen, when I think of the religious state of my country, when I think of the diversities of religion that prevail in my country, I do often give way to despair. At any rate for a long time to come we shall not see the consummation brought about in this way (applause). Let each one ask himself the question, and he must admit that there is no influence more potent than religion. Let us only for illustration, take the instance of the Punjabees. Among them flourished Gûrû Nanak and Gûrû Govind who were great religious instructors. By their religious teachings the Punjabees had once become a great compact mass—they constituted themselves into one compact basis,and moved as one man. Why,they were the power in the country—ah, a great power,—a vast power,—a mighty power,—a formidable power. But where is it now ? Has it no hope ? Shall we talk everlastingly of the greatness of our country,—shall we talk and talk everlastingly of the resources of our country, of the destination of our country, and yet go unimproved—why, go misappropriated by a foreign people who would be great at *our* cost. (Loud applause). Should such a thing be allowed to go on ? Do I see before me the sons of India ? Let me ask you what you think of this,—of the great responsibility that

attaches to you as children of the land—the great responsibility that God has placed on you. God has blessed our country with a great and vast population ; God has blessed our country with the mighty resources that can never be equalled by any country on the face of the earth, and shall we be disloyal to the giver of our mercies, and prove untrue to ourselves? Shall we allow our own things to be appropriated and used for the greatness of *other people—a foreign people*? This is the question. If I have thought on the question once, I have thought on it over and over again. I believe that if we look for a speedy consummation, ah, there is but one hope. With all that I have said, I *do* believe that the British rule is a real blessing to us. Situated as we are it is a real blessing to us. I have been speaking of the love of our country which ought to inspire us—I have been speaking of the justice that we ought to render and of the resources of our country, nevertheless I am prepared to say that situated as we are, the British rule is a real blessing to us, and why so? Ah, there is reason for it—there is cogent reason for it. We have one sovereign, and we know that,that sovereign represents the genius of Great Britain. As students of history you know what the genius of Great Britain means. Why, if England is great in one thing more than auother, I regard England as such because England has been the apostle of constitutionalism. If you have studied the history of England to any profit, you cannot be said to have read it without longing for constitutionalism, for the reign of law, but is it not a fact that for some reason or other there is at the present moment an apathy in the midst of us

of a most culpable type as to our rights and privileges. Ask this brother and that brother, and speak to him of rights and privileges, and when he thinks of the ancient greatness of India and his present position, his heart bleeds, and says talk not to me of rights and privileges, those good old days are gone. Trouble me no more, Why tantalize us with talking of rights and privileges? That is the sort of response we have. Nevertheless gentlemen, it is not doing justice to our position. It may be that England is an apostle of constitutionalism, but it has not come as an apostle of constitutionalism in this country; nevertheless we are a loyal people, that there has not been a people so loyal as we are,—loyal not only to law but even to the person that represents that law; loyal we must be to constitutionalism, loyal we must be to every right and privilege that our constitutional sovereign confers upon us. It may be that our rights are sacrificed, but let us not lose sight of our individuality. Let us not lose sight of the fact that we are *men*. Let us at the same time remember that if England is now a constitutional country, the English people have had to struggle through for years and years—yes it was a life-long struggle; an ages-long struggle—before the principles of constitutionalism were really understood and enforced even in England. Even if I have rights and privileges but a few in number, I have still a title to the name of man; for a *man* without rights I say is no man at all. We are only desirous of power—power more or less extensive, but if we are simply powerless, why, we should at once give way to despair for our destiny (Applause). We all of us look up to one sovereign,

we all of us enjoy certain common rights and privileges, and is it not possible for us to unite together realizing our common interest in this respect to protect our rights and privileges? If we only might unite together so as to have these rights and privileges enforced on our behalf, there will be the consummating bond. Let me illustrate what I mean by reference to an important event in the history of Bengal. I would ask you to go back to the year 1860. In those days you would have found that there was an indigo factory at every five miles. Well I need not dilate on the oppression exercised by these indigo factors, whose names have already become infamous all over India. There was oppression upon oppression. These indigo factors would have everything their own way. This state of things went on and on, till it had over reached its climax. Ah, it has been truely said that injustice has ist punity. When I find before me maladministration,I do not despair; for, it must create justice in the long run. The indigo factors went on oppressing over the helpless ryots. They complained but their greivances were not redressed. There was no chance. What was to be done. Ah, Bengalees as we are, timid as we are represented to be, these very helpless royots grew to be a power—these very victims to injustice, however helpless and powerless they were, Omnipotence exercised itself on their behalf. Yes, God says to India that the victims to injustice have their grievances redressed. Omnipotence shall exercise itself on their behalf. So you see these ryots combined together, and as one man refused to sow indigo for the indigo factors. They knew that they were helpless,—they knew they were pow-

erless, but still they knew that injustice was done to them; they combined and only added to the weight of their oppression. They were made over to the magistrates and yet they refused to work; they were sent to prison and yet they refused—refused as one man. Their houses were burnt down,—most of them levelled to the ground—their wives and children driven out and reduced to starvation but still they held out, held out as one man. This actually occurred in Nuddea. There was the Commissioner Lushington. He could not bear to see helpless women and children driven out of their houses without shelter, without food, about to starve. His heart was touched. He goes to the Nuddea jail and sees the imprisoned ryots together and seeks to touch their hearts by vididly painting before them the picture of their wives and children they had left behind and implored them to give in; he told them that at the beginning of the next year they might or might not enter upon a new conrtact and declared to them that they will not only not be punished but shall have their houses restored to them. These temptations were placed before them and they were asked to give in and not to assert their rights, but these ryots held firm as a rock. They combined together to assert their rights. There was some sort of influence operating in their minds which they could not resist. There they were, in prison. Of course they were not life prisoners. Time rolled on, and these ryots came out of jail, and what did they do? Did they go back to the indigo factors? No. They took to cultivation on their own responsibilities, and what is their situation now? They are certainly now in a very prosperous state, and you hear

no more of their oppressions. Nor is that all. A Europeans' name used to be a terror to the people of the country, but once these ryots asserted their rights as men, as subjects to the genius of Great Britian; & you find that the the prestige of Englishmen is gone; that justice, though in the long run, has been done to them. So I say if these timid ryots the Bengalees—represented to be the specimens of timidity (a laugh) conscious of a single right could unite themselves into a power,is it too much to expect the same from you. If the Maratha intelligence and the Maratha muscle come forward conscious of their rights and if the community of the timid Bengalee and the muscular Maratha could be formed in one,would it be impossible to assert at every step all our rights and privileges ? (Applause). .There is at present a wide gulf between us,—a social gulf,—a linguistic gulf, but have we nothing in common ? Have we nó common rights to assert ? I say we have all common rights to assert, simply because we live under one sovereign. Rights have been conferred upon you Marathas if they are conferred upon Bengalees ; and it may be that you may well afford to do without our effort, but we can not certainly afford to do without your's (Applause) As inhabitants of Poona the centre of political life, as inhabitants of this country, you should be prepared to take the lead in the matter, and we shall be most willing to co-operate with you in this common bond that may be established between the East and the West. (Loud Applause). In the English Language when we speak of a thing diametrically opposed, we say it is as opposite as the East to the West. Let us therefore say that whatever

the genius of the English language may be, it is possible for the West and the East to combine—a golden link may combine them together—associate them together. Let the East go to the West and let the West come to the East, and if we thus combine together, and realize at every step that we may take, that we all live under one sovereign—that we all have common rights and privileges. —If we realize a position as men—if we acquit ourselves as men, if we simply take to heart what the ryots in Nuddea acomplished on a small scale,—if all India combine as one man to assert their rights and privileges—ah, that would be a glorious consummation. (Loud applause). Is it not possible thus to unite India into one nationality? But who is to take the lead? Oh, for a fire from the Heavens that might enkindle the bosom of every Indian,—oh, for a kind of divine impulse that may inspire us when one morning we might feel ourselves drawn one towards the other, and uniting ourselves together, think of our rights and privileges. But who would inspire us with such a feeling as that? There have been prophets in India, and we do look for such a prophet. Yes, such a prophet is to be found within the severy walls of *Poona* (applause)—such a consummation is to be brought about. Gentlemen, it is a simple fact that we have been demoralizing ourselves. We have the arms of our ancient greatness, and we are proud of the relics of our ancient greatness. An eminent friend of mine was proposing that we should go to Sattara, and see there the relics of the ancient greatness of that city, and for a pleasure trip to such a place as that? Are we really Indians? Do not our hearts bleed to see these relics as so many ruins

staring us in the face, and exhibiting to us the fallen state of India? And should we take glory in such things as that? Is it not a melancholy fact that whenever we have to talk of India, we must talk of the past. Only lately I had to study some of the continental proverbs, when I came in contact with the one which is very significant in itself and that was that "the mule alone need talk of its parentage." (A laugh). Are we not just in the position of the mule when we only refer to our ancestor's greatness? If we pass elsewhere only in the name of our ancestors, if looking at our aspirations we do not trace our ancestry—we are all unworthy to be called the deseendants of those great men—we are but unworthy sons and daughters of those great ancestos, and should hang down our heads in shame rather than in glory. We must have all the improvement, appliances in operation so that the people of India would be educated into a sense of their rights and privileges. I am not connivant of the state of things in Poona, but I may speak of the Provinces of Bengal. There the people are being educated into a sense of their rights and privileges. There you find it introduced into the young men of our schools and colleges; you have scarcely a meeting of young men there of the students of colleges and schools but you see an array of political patriotism —You find them brimful of love for their country. It is not only in meetings that you find an array of warm love for the country, that warmth extends even to households. We all have heard of nursery songs. Well, there are ladies in our Zenana—mothers of children who sing the nursery songs, sing to lull the the infant baby, and will you believe it that

not long ago we happened to be with a few friends in an ante-room where there was a mother singing and lulling an infant baby to sleep, and what was the sum and substance of that song. If ever I regretted that I could not sing—if ever I regretted I say that I had not the power of music, I regret it now; for if I could only sing that song now, I am sure I would melt a most obdurate heart. The substance of the song was this. India was addressed, and the illuminated streets of Calcutta were referred to. The song went on to declare that while the streets of Calcutta were illimunated, but ah, mother India, thine ancient greatness is over. Thus you see that such ideas are even infused by a loving mother into the minds of an infant baby. Thus you see that even the ladies in the Zenana have come to realize the greatness of India, and if ladies realize the greatness of India, does it not follow that they might leave by genuine sons and daughters workiug mightily to bring about the cousummation of which I have spoken? Has there been as mother such a that of Shivajee was? That was the mother brimful of love—love for the ambition of her son,—love for the greatness and glory of her son. That was the mother that devoutly prayed for the consummation of that ambition,—that was the mother that had the Genuine spirit of patriotism in her. Napolean the great was asked what had made France great, and what was his answer? He said, 'Her mothers.' If only we had mothers like the mother of Shivajee, ah, India would have a spirit of genuine patriotism infused into the heart of infant babes. He knows to love his country well who works and dies for it. I say we must

have our improvements and appliances into operation. In our city of Bengal I am grateful to say that these are already in operation. There are people who have been schooling systematically at very great sacrifice to educate the people of Bengal into a sense of their rights and privileges. Gentlemen I would ask you seriously to consider this question. Is it or is it not desirable that we should seek to constitute ourselves into one great nationality. Shall we be true to God,—true to nature—true to all the improvements and appliances at our hand ? Shall we be true even to Great Britain—the apostle of constitution ? Or shall we spurn them. Shall we defy God ? Shall we neglect to assert our position as a great nation ? Shall we trample under foot the mercies of God ? Friends, my object has been to ask you to be alive to your responsibilities if you have them. I say you have greater responsibilities because you have greater powers at your disposal. What is my feeling gentlemen, at the present moment ? I see before me a vast assemblage. and although you might call it utopian, I do wish that even now this vast assemblage might, if possible, be petrified one huge mass, and the next moment, why then we shall have in this very hall a miniature fortification (Tremendous applause.) Let us remember that God has given us the head and the hands, and if the head and the hands do not co-operate, it is simply because we are wanting in hearts. Yes, we are heartless children of Idnia. We should be ashamed to call ourselves Indians if we are not prepared to strive to the best of our abilities to bring about such a consummation as I have suggested

Let us forget all the diversities that may exist, and remember that we have certain responsibilities with regard to the great problem of Indian greatness. Let us avail ourselves of every opportunity, and as one man let us work, and I am sure that the day shall come when India shall once more be great, ah, greater even than it once was. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

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